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ANNUAL CONFERENCE

OF

FIRST MINISTERS

PROVINCE OF NOVA SCOTIA

FRAMEWORK FOR ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

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Introduction

The Government of Nova Scotia in fulfilling its commitment to womens' issues, draws upon the public and private sector for input into its decision-making processes. Structures in place which are intended to help ensure that women become full and equal partners in society are: 1) A Ministerial portfolio which deals with womens' concerns; 2) **The Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women** established and funded by government to provide advice and to lobby on behalf of women's concerns; 3) the **Interdepartmental Committee on the Status of Women**, comprised of key civil servants from every department of government to advise government on policy issues affecting women and provide research support; and 4) an official appointed by Government to the Policy Board with the responsibility for assessing the impact of government policy initiatives on women.

These mechanisms, combining the elements of public consultation with the coordination of expertise within the Provincial Government, offer a channel for recommendations on matters dealing with or affecting the status of women that fall within the jurisdictions af all levels of government and on existing or proposed legislation or policy being dealt with by government.

Major Initiatives in Nova Scotia

The following represent key initiatives undertaken by the Government of Nova Scotia.

Family Violence

Domestic violence is unacceptable in any society.

The Attorney General has sent a directive to police instructing them to investigate all complaints of family violence and to lay charges in all situations other than a first offence common assault.

In 1983, the Committee on Family Violence was established to coordinate public and private initiatives in this area. Both government departments and community organizations have representation on the committee. As a result of the work of the committee, proper guidelines for establishing transition houses have been formulated, a stable funding base has been established and protocols for hospitals have been developed. There are currently five transition houses in Nova Scotia with a sixth being established. As well, there are several safe houses. The provincial government funds 75% of the approved operating budgets of these facilities.

A multi-media public information campaign on wife battering is now in the final planning stages.

In 1985, the government introduced the Adult Protection Act directed specifically toward those adults who lack the ability to care and fend adequately for themselves in the face of abuse and neglect.

Day Care

There are approximately 8000 spaces available in the 334 licensed private and non-profit day care centres in the province. Of these, 1910 spaces in 47 registered day care centres are subsidized by the province.

As a result of the recommendations of the 1983 Task Force on Day Care, major improvements have been made to these services in Nova Scotia. There has been a 35% increase in subsidies provided for children from low income families. The number of subsidized spaces for children, including handicapped children, has also increased. In 1984, changes were made to the Day Care Act and Regulations, establishing minimum education and training requirements for staff in day care centres. This will result in an upgrading of the services offered and improve the quality of day care throughout the province.

Vocational Rehabilitation Program For Single Parents

This provincial program provides assessment, counselling, training and job placement services to single parents receiving family benefits. The primary objective of the program is to

assist single parents to become financially independent. Since it began in late 1983, approximately 1300 single parents have participated. As of March 31, 1985, 467 had participated in training, 196 had been placed in employment and 174 were job-ready and searching for employment.

Homemakers Services

There are currently 44 homemakers agencies in Nova Scotia employing 229 homemakers. With the introduction of the Home Life Supports Program in 1984, agencies were able to increase their staff by approximately 50%. This has enabled these agencies to provide service to more families and to introduce new services within local communities. Although senior citizens are the primary users of homemakers services, families with children have also benefitted from the expansion.

Matrimonial Property Act

Enacted in 1980, the Nova Scotia Matrimonial Property Act sets forth a basic presumption of equal division of property between the spouses upon marriage termination.

Lawyers and judges are now required by statute law to presume the equal contribution of spouses to a marriage whether or not both spouses worked outside the home. As a result, the contribution of spouses who raise children and maintain a home for the benefit of the family is therefore more clearly recognized.

Family Maintenance Act

In concurrence with the Matrimonial Property Act, the Family Maintenance Act was passed. It sets up a comprehensive maintenance scheme for all persons requiring such assistance. One of its basic premises is that though either spouse may be responsible for the maintenance of the other, marriage breakdown does not automatically create a right to maintenance. It is the responsibility of each spouse to try to become financially independent as quickly as possible after a marriage breakdown.

Among other things, this statute provides a means by which the Courts can order one spouse to pay maintenance to the other, and provides enforcement mechanisms which help to ensure these court orders are enforced.

Education

Education is considered one of the key means of bringing about permanent change in the status of women. Changes in method, approach, or content are easier and quicker to set in motion than changes in attitude. Earlier initiatives taken to assist girls and women to take an equal place with boys and men in the education system and, ultimately in the economic and social life of Nova Scotia include: 1) a review of school textual materials for sexual bias, introduced in 1975 and followed by guidelines to publishers, has been developed; and

2) guidelines to school boards regarding opportunities to be made available to girls and boys to take both home economics and industrial arts.

School Curriculum

More recently, reviews of students taking math and the sciences - areas that seem to promise youth greater economic security in the technological age - indicate that the number of female students has risen steadily over the past decade in all areas. Girls are still not equally represented in honours math or in advanced physics courses, which may in part account for their not going on to pursue related university or technical careers to the same degree as male students.

The Minister of Education established the Women in Education Committee as an internal working group to advise him on matters relating to women and education. The Committee has analyzed the participation of girls in mathematics and science programs and will be relating these findings to the overall situation reported by the Science Council of Canada on Science Education in Canadian schools.

Women in the Teaching Profession

The Minister of Education, who was at the time also the Minister of the Status of Women, sent a letter to all school boards, noting the predominance of women among classroom teachers, as compared to their very low representation among

administrators. The Minister asked school boards to encourage qualified women to enter the administration field and will be reviewing what progress has been made towards the achievement of desired increased participation rate of women at the administration levels. Several boards have responded positively and action has been taken.

Health

Nova Scotia has ongoing programs in the areas of nutrition, personal health counselling, and physical fitness. Public health nurse and dental referrals occur through the school system. Prenatal information and care, post-natal clinics; and home nursing visits continue throughout the province at their established and relatively high levels of intensity.

The Province, through the Nova Scotia Commission on Drug Dependency continues to examine the needs of female clients and efforts are made to improve community outreach. Various ongoing committees examine ways to minimize the double standard which stigmatizes women with drug dependency problems. As well, Nova Scotia continues to place emphasis on the total family as a focus for the recovery process.

Rape kits and directives on how to treat victims of sexual assault have been distributed to all hospital emergency departments throughout the province.

Pension Reform

The Province of Nova Scotia has been participating with other provincial governments and the federal government in discussions relating to pension reform, as well as reviewing the recommendations of the Nova Scotia Royal Commission on Pensions. A number of the proposed reforms will affect women directly and ensure increased economic security in their senior years. The principal recommendations of the Royal Commission which affect women are: 1) Credit splitting upon separation or divorce; 2) Reduced requirements for vesting; 3) Extension of pension benefits to persons in part time employment; and 4) Provision of survivors benefits under private pension plans and the continuation of such benefits upon remarriage.

Plan of Action

Women in Nova Scotia, the Nova Scotia Plan of Action, adopted in 1984, is an important commitment by the Government of Nova Scotia to the fundamental principles of equality for women. As part of the preamble states, "All persons should enjoy equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities without regard to differences of sex or marital status and these rights should be protected by law."

The Plan contains 38 wide-ranging initiatives designed to improve the status of women in Nova Scotia. It makes commitments regarding the family, health, education and training, employment, economic development, politics, and stereotyping.

The research and consultative processes which led to its development and adoption was extensive and exhaustive, reflecting government's desire to develop a cohesive and comprehensive document. Government monitored the progress of the Plan and during its formation took a number of initiatives which have helped to realize a number of goals.

The Plan has been widely distributed and government has asked all Nova Scotians to give it thoughtful attention and to contact the Minister responsible for the Status of Women with criticism, comments and suggestions.

It is intended that the Plan will reflect changing needs and new issues. It is a document which is intended to be goal-oriented, while at all times reflecting the needs of women in Nova Scotia.

Economic Equality for Women - Training

In the Royal Commission on Equality in Employment, Judge Rosalie Abella defined equity as follows: "Equality in employment means that no one is denied opportunities for reasons that have nothing to do with inherent ability. It means equal access free from arbitrary obstructions."

The Province agrees with this statement and in the implementation of the White Paper on Economic Development, the Government has also laid the foundation for fulfilling its goals under the Education and Training Section of the Plan of Action.

Increasing the opportunities for women to participate in traditionally male occupations and vice versa will be aided by the fact that on November 26th, a new Department was created which will combine the former vocational and technical training component of the Department of Education with manpower responsibilities formerly in the Department of Labour and Manpower.

The Manpower component of the Department of Labour and Manpower was responsible for the planning and evaluation of training programs, youth initiatives and program development. These responsibilities now fall within the new portfolio.

Canadian Job Strategy

The Canadian Job Strategy, announced in June by the Canadian Employment and Immigration Commission, reflects a new approach to training and outlines a complete redesign of the federal government's labour market programs. The strategy ensures that federal resources are used effectively to being assistance to those most in need.

The program has been in place for approximately two months. Nova Scotia has announced that it will participate during the 1985-86 fiscal year for ten percent or 3.5 million dollars. The strategy seeks:

- Equitable access to employment and training programs

- Fair share level of participation for each of the target groups established for each program
- If target levels cannot be otherwise achieved, special measures will be taken
- Target groups who will benefit are women, native people, persons with disabilities and visible minority groups
- Allowance structures have been designed to ensure target group members can take the training they require

Vocational and Technical Training

A specific initiative of vocational and technical training, with the support of Employment and Immigration Canada, has been to offer a range of part-time programs exclusively for women, as well as Basic Training and Skill Development for men and women. Information on these programs was publicized widely in the news media and, to encourage the widest possible response, thought is now being given to the ancillary services, including daycare, that may be required to help mothers, often sole or part-breadwinners for their families, to take these courses.

Co-operative Education

Added emphasis is also being placed upon co-operative education. As young women are placed in industry in the course of their training, they are able to convince employers more easily of their skills and abilities and are more easily accepted into permanent employment.

Women's Entrepreneurial Development Program

The Department of Development has been active in encouraging women operating or planning business ventures. In consultation with representatives of the academic community and business women, the department initiated a number of major projects during 1985.

The Women's Entrepreneurial Development Program announced in July, 1985, is a pilot project designed to provide women with an opportunity to further develop entrepreneurial and technical skills in the areas of planning, marketing and the operational aspects of business.

The grant program, which cost shares on expenses to a maximum of $1500, has been designed to address the need for women to increase their skills, knowledge and confidence in areas critical to the success of the business venture.

The program is also encouraging more women to investigate new business ideas.

In addition to the Women's Entrepreneurial Development Program, the department has developed a computer data base containing a Registry of Women Business Owners and Managers. The Registry will play a central role in encouraging networking among women across the province. The Registry provides a mechanism for individuals to overcome the isolation experienced by many business owners, particularly by women in rural areas of the province.

The department has also actively participated over the last three years as co-sponsor in a number of seminars for Women in Business as well as seminars for Women Entrepreneurs.

Nova Scotia has taken a lead role in supporting a major proposal by the Acadia Institute to produce a film on Women Entrepreneurs in the Maritimes. The film is designed to encourage women to establish more new businesses by providing role models and factual information on starting a small business, in order to reinforce existing entrepreneurial activity and to provide for public education relating to the economic contribution of women business owners. It is hoped the film will be completed by the summer of 1986.

Youth Initiatives Office

The government has established a Youth Initiatives Office to help combat those factors which have been identified as contributing to youth unemployment:

1. lack of work experience
2. limitations in education and training
3. lack of adequate career counselling

The mandate of the office is:

1. to ensure that a comprehensive program of career counselling to those ages 15-24.
2. to develop new initiatives which will lead to productive employment opportunities for youth.

In this regard, the Youth Initiatives Office will work in close co-operation with the Department of Education to assist in its provision of material support for the guidance counsellors in Nova Scotia's schools who have the responsibility for providing career counselling to in-school youth. The two departments will

also cooperate in keeping guidance counsellors up to date on new programs and opportunities. Emphasis will also be placed on expanding work experience and co-operative education programs.

Out-of-school youth will be reached through the four regional career counselling field offices and mobile career centres.

The Mobile Career Centres will provide career counselling in small rural communities and in regions where there are special needs.

Nova Scotia Training and Employment Program

The Nova Scotia Training and Employment Program is designed to create additional employment opportunities through structured training on the job. Beginning on August 1, 1985, it is estimated the program will establish 1000 training places with the aim of creating permanent employment.

The Nova Scotia Department of ~~Manpower and Occupational~~ Human Resources and Training approves each training opportunity. The Government will provide financial assistance to a maximum of $2.00 per hour for a maximum of 20 weeks.

Eligible employers are those who operate in Nova Scotia's resource industries, and small business employers who have less than fifty employees and less than $2,000,000.00 in annual sales.

The Province as an Employer

Part-time Employment

The Interdepartmental Advisory Committee on Part-time Employment has completed its report on continuing part-time civil service employment with pro-rated benefits, including part-time job-sharing arrangements within the classified civil service. The Civil Service Commission will propose to the Nova Scotia Government Employees Union that part-time employment be covered under all civil service collective agreements. The current round of negotiations will deal with this issue.

Training and Development

The Civil Service Commission has initiated Supervisory and Management Development Programs in which the participation of women is being encouraged.

The Civil Service Commission conducts workshops on Affirmative Action to explain to managers their role in the Affirmative Action process.

Government has implemented a Policy on Sexual Harassment, and personnel and line managers haave been trained in the proper handling and investigation of sexual harassment complaints.

The Civil Service Commission has completed a Training Needs Survey related to the development and promotion of persons in senior clerical positions, the majority of whom are women.

Personnel Policies and Practices

The Civil Service Commission has conducted a review of personnel policies and practices aimed at the removal of barriers which limit opportunities for promotion available to women. This resulted in revised job descriptions which excluded reference to gender and qualifications unrelated to job requirements, an application for employment form excluding reference to gender, marital status and age, and including documentation of voluntary work experience and work in the home, and production of recruitment literature and audio visual material which depicts women in non-traditional occupational roles.

Commitments

The achievements of the Government of Nova Scotia are intended to help address the challenges of achieving employment equity. As well, however, the future must be addressed. There still remains the need to create a more positive employment outlook for women in Nova Scotia, and thereby increase the growing direct contribution of women to our economy.

In keeping with the requirement to make the most effective use of the combined resources available to women in Nova Scotia, the Government will continue to strengthen resources of the Interdepartmental Committee on the Status of Women in conducting research, coordinating government resources, and in developing communications.

In adopting the 1984 Plan of Action for Women in Nova Scotia, the government committed itself to monitoring the progress of its agencies in working towards the goals set out in the Plan. Now it announces more specific measures in relation to employment equity in the public service. A monitoring and review process will be established to report on the participation levels of women in the Nova Scotia Civil service, women on provincial government boards and commissions, and women employed through direct job creation and training programs.

In response to the increasing focus on women's issues and on employment equity at the international, national and provincial levels, the Minister responsible for the Status of Women is investigating, through a dialogue with all interested parties, the requirements for a women's secretariat or directorate. The requirement for such an organization is to be based on the need of women in Nova Scotia to gain better access to the Provincial Government, and the requirements of the Government to have direct contact with women in assessing the issues.